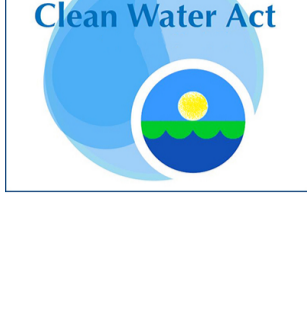




Short Ears, Long Tales

Courte Oreilles Lakes Association

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The Clean Water Act at Fifty

Its Origins and Evolution

By Allison Slavick

"The kind of natural environment we bequeath to our children and grandchildren is of paramount importance. If we cannot swim in our lakes and rivers, if we cannot breathe the air God has given us, what other comforts can life offer us?" - Senator Howard Baker of Tennessee

"Can we afford clean water? Can we afford rivers and lakes and streams and oceans which continue to make life possible on this planet? Can we afford life itself? Those questions were never asked as we destroyed the waters of our Nation, and they deserve no answers as we finally move to restore and renew them." - Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine

The Clean Water Act, in its modern form, had its fiftieth anniversary last year. The Act is historic legislation for the evidence it provides of a (nostalgia-inducing?) fully functioning U.S. Congress and for, what the *Congressional Quarterly* (CQ) called, "the most comprehensive and expensive environmental legislation in the nation's history." And its impact on fresh water and the country's oceans is vast and enduring.

The legislation's origin goes back to 1948, to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. That early recognition of the need to stop polluting our lakes, streams, and rivers grew out of the industry and urban growth fueled by World War II. Largely ineffective and unenforced, the Act was rewritten in 1972. With broad congressional and public support for cleaning up existing pollution and preventing even more, the bill was stuck in Congressional conference for ten months – more than 40 meetings were held – until compromises were reached in October 1972. What was called the Clean Water Act passed both chambers of Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support.

CQ reported that the bill was a product of agreements made in "an atmosphere complicated by consistent Nixon Administration opposition." Nixon himself had created the Environmental Protection Agency through an executive order just two years earlier but thought there were more important "very real threats to our quality of life," such as high prices and taxes, than clean water. He vetoed the bill, but within two hours both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to override the veto with impassioned speeches from the floor, including the words of Senators Baker and Muskie above.

"No one is likely to invent more clean water, more clean air, more arable land."

Senator Edmund Muskie

Within a few months, the EPA issued guidelines for developing or revising state water quality standards, which were now required by law. The Act called for using data and science in developing the standards for mitigating and eliminating water pollution. Cutting through the government's language, though, further reveals the passion and humanity behind the Clean Water Act. To quote directly from the EPA's press release of February 13, 1973:

All waters should be protected for recreational uses in or on the water and for the preservation and propagation of desirable species of aquatic life. Use and value of water for public water supplies, agricultural, industrial, and other purposes, as well as navigation will also be considered in setting standards. However, only in special circumstances will the criteria supporting these uses be permitted to interfere with recreational uses and the preservation of desirable species of aquatic life.

Richard Nixon



Jimmy Carter



The two US presidents who were most involved with the adoption the Clean Water Act in 1972 and its revision in 1977.

Within a few years, Congress went to work on what President Carter called a "mid-course correction," which further strengthened our government's goal of eliminating the discharge of pollutants into our water. The revised Act of 1977 called for controlling toxins and carcinogens that endangered public health and addressed oil and other hazardous spills in oceans. It mandated a program for controlling pollution in our country's 76 million acres of wetlands. Funding was provided for municipal sewage treatment projects and for cleaning up the backlog of municipal pollution. And significantly, Federal government projects would no longer be exempt from following State water quality guidelines.

Today, the Clean Water Act has been helpful for the water quality of Lac Courte Oreilles and Little LCO. COLA has pledged to use the best science available in protecting the lake and in preventing further degradation. COLA and the LCO Tribe have sponsored years of water quality surveys and ongoing studies and data collection to build support for and act in protecting the lake. As Senator Muskie said fifty years ago, "No one is likely to invent more clean water, more clean air, more arable land."



The LCO Tribal Conservation Department has been collecting water samples and measuring LCO's water quality for decades.



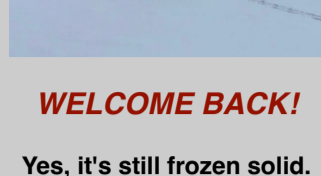
Allison Slavick is a nature lover who bicycles, skis, and picks berries near her home on Crystal Lake in southern Bayfield County.

Contact Allison at allison.slavick@gmail.com

Questions, comments or suggestions for future articles may be sent to communications@cola-wi.org

COLA NEEDS YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT

Please consider a tax-deductible donation today!



WELCOME BACK!

Yes, it's still frozen solid.

MANY THANKS ...

... to all who attended the Jan. 23, 2023 public hearing with the WDNR and supported COLA's and the LCO Tribe's proposal for a site-specific criterion for phosphorus of 10 µg/L for big LCO. Thanks also to those who sent in comments. The Natural Resources Board will meet and consider this proposal in June.



COLA AWARDED \$150,000 FOR AIS MANAGEMENT

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources awarded COLA a \$150,000 grant for management of aquatic invasive species in the LCO lakes for the years 2023 and 2024.

An informational meeting has been scheduled for April 5, 2023. More information [here](#).

WISCONSIN LAKES AND RIVERS CONVENTION

The Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Convention will take place on April 19-21 in Stevens Point. More information [here](#).

WISCONSIN CONSERVATION CONGRESS REQUESTS YOUR INPUT

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress and Department of Natural Resources will offer their annual opportunity for the public to provide input on a variety of natural resource related questions. An online questionnaire is also available [here](#) from April 10 at noon through April 13 at noon.

Note in particular questions #63-68 regarding resolutions dealing with wake boats. More [here](#).



WILD & SCENIC FILM FESTIVAL

The 2023 Wild & Scenic Film Festival, presented by the Landmark Conservancy, will be held on April 15 at the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe University. More information [here](#).

2023 NATURAL HISTORY FIELD TRIPS

The Extension Program at the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe University is once again sponsoring natural history field trips led by Mike Heim. More information [here](#).



TALES OF LAC COURTE OREILLES

This book, edited by Tom and Sue Burgess, together with COLA's history committee, provides a detailed history of Lac Courte Oreilles.

Copies are available at the St. Francis Solanus Mission in Reserve, or contact [COLA](#).



I-LIDS ON THE LOOKOUT

The Internet [Landing Installed Device Sensor \(I-LIDS\)](#) will be operational in 2023 at the DNR landing in Chicago Bay to monitor boats and trailers for aquatic invasive plants. The Clean Boat/Clean Water boat launch inspections are funded, in part, with a \$4,000 WDNR grant, along with a \$1,400 grant for video cameras.



SEE ANYTHING WEIRD?

If you observe green water, algal mats on the surface or floating or dying fish - anything out of the ordinary - please take pictures and report this using [COLA's observation forms](#) immediately! COLA will alert the WDNR, the LCO Tribe, collect water samples, etc.



LCO NEEDS YOUR HELP

COLA is a **volunteer organization**. That means essential jobs don't get done unless someone steps up to help out. Contact communications@cola-wi.org if interested or you need more information.

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COLA Mission: 1) to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of Lac Courte Oreilles and Little Lac Courte Oreilles, their shorelands and surrounding areas, while respecting the interests of property owners and the rights of the general public; and 2) to consider, study, survey and respond to issues deemed relevant by COLA's membership.

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